TRUE TASTE:

OR,

Female Philoſophy.

Being An

EPISTLE from *SYLVIA*

TO

LIBERTINA.

——————Deſinant
Maledicere, malefacta ne noſcant ſua. *Ter. P. A.* 22.

——Pleaſure's Her Chace: In this Purſuit She's keen,
And ever ſhifting, with Falſe Views, the Scene:
A Wiſh obtain'd, She does a Cloud embrace,
And ſtarts ſome other Object for the Chace:
Eager to graſp what none can e'er acquire,
She hazards Fame, to gratify Deſire.
The Fate of all theſe flutt'ring Coquette *Things,*
Is like the Moth's, which burns, at length, its Wings:
Some puſhing Fop, finds an Unguarded Hour,
And they are ſubject to a Coxcomb's Pow'r. RAKE of TASTE.

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TRUE TASTE:

OR

Female Philotopsy.

BODLEIAN LIBRARY

SYLVIA

TO

LIBERTINA.

IN vain, fair Libertine, with Wit misplac'd,
You strive to vindicate your vicious Taste;
Thro' all thy tinsel Arguments I see,
And pity thee, more than thou pitiest me:
Glad am I, that loose Pleasures I despise,
And am, as you pretend, by Age grown wise;
I know them Vanity, but who but thee
E'er said I fled not them, till they fled me?
Whoe'er, but you, dar'd ever wound my Fame,
And cast such Stains, malicious, on my Name?
Who told you, I'd Recourse to ev'ry Art,
When my own Charms no more cou'd fire the Heart?

Did you Lead Combs e'er at my Toilet ſee?
Did you know Waſhes ever us'd by me?
Were all theſe Things, as you pretend them, true,
Shou'd I have made a *Confidante* of you?
Poor envious Spite! but know that I deſpiſe
Your empty Scandal, and injurious Lyes.

If with Deſire of Knowledge I am fir'd,
How know'ſt thou it is but to be admir'd?
What tho' my Charms have ta'en their Flight long ſince,
Muſt therefore all my Virtue be Pretence?
A Stale ſet up to draw Fools Admiration,
And make me thought a Saint throughout the Nation?

From Books, you ſay, this ſingle Truth is plain,
That all our Study and our Learning's vain;
And that the farther we in Years advance,
We but the better know our Ignorance;
Whence you in Blindneſs wiſh ſtill to remain,
And call the Search of Wiſdom uſeleſs Pain.
Mean Wiſh! proceeding from a ſordid Mind!
You're ſure the firſt who coveted being blind.

What tho' our Knowledge here be circumſcrib'd,
And abſurd Notions are by moſt imbib'd?
Muſt we all Knowledge therefore quite deſpiſe,
And be mere Fools 'cauſe we can ne'er be Wiſe?
You ſay, you this conceive by Nature's Sight,
The Finite can't take in the Infinite.
True, God by us can't comprehended be,
But yet we know thus much o'th' Deity;
The Good he loves, the Vicious he deteſts,
Thoſe he rewards, who keep his high Beheſts;
And thoſe chaſtizes, who, with impious Mind,
Their Pleaſure in their Diſobedience find.
Vain is't to dive into what Heav'n conceals,
But for our Welfare Heav'n enough reveals.
Why ſhou'd we fondly then attempt to pry
" Into the Secrets of Eternity?"

Next, Giant-like, a home Attack you make,
And wou'd the Baſe of all Religion ſhake.
That here we 're plac'd we know, and how, and why
" We now exiſt, and are decreed to die;"

" We likewiſe know, that we ſhall live again,
" And, as we live, to endleſs Joy, or Pain;
" That in no other Forms we ſhall be bound,
" Nor will our Deeds be in Oblivion drown'd;
" The Good will find a Heav'n, the Bad a Hell,
" This School-men know, and ſo do you as well."
How then, with Giant Confidence, d'you dare
'Gainſt Heav'n and your own Conſcience to wage War?
Whence this new-fangled Syſtem have you ſtole,
To blind your Judgment, and debauch your Soul?
T-nd-l and *W-ll-ſt-n* come ſhort of thee,
And thou would'ſt make a Proſelyte of me:
But I ſha'n't headlong to Perdition run,
I ſee the Danger, and your Snares will ſhun.

You ſay, indeed, I'm but by Age grown Wiſe,
And ne'er whilſt Young, was known to moralize;
That, had not Pleaſure from me wing'd its Flight,
I ſtill in ſenſual Joys had ta'en Delight.
This, true, you ſay, but not a Word you prove;
What Paramours had I in vicious Love?

Had

Had I been in my Youth ſo looſely giv'n,
How came I now to abandon all for Heav'n?
Do Punks at Fifty uſually give o'er?
Won't once a Whore ſtill always be a Whore?
Meliſſa was a Strumpet at Fourſcore.

Did Age in her e'er mortify Deſire?
Did ſhe want Men to quench her vicious Fire?
And when the Lightning of her Eyes was fled,
Did not her well-lin'd Purſe ſupply its ſtead?
Had I been curs'd with her ſalacious Taſte,
Her Remedy I ſoon might have embrac'd.

But ſuch a Courſe, you'll ſay, had ſtain'd my Name,
Looſe though I was, I valu'd ſtill my Fame;
And placing Virtue but in others Thought,
Deem'd myſelf virtuous whilſt I was not caught:
This Doctrine you are pleas'd t' aſcribe to me,
A Doctrine, fit, indeed, for Rakes, like thee:
But dare her worſt of Enemies aver,
Of *Sylvia*, they e'er heard the like from her?

You ſay, that I a Groupe of Youths enjoy'd,
How comes 't that Groupe never my Fame deſtroy'd?
Since when were Youths for Secrefy renown'd?
Thus you with Inconſiſtencies abound,
Whilſt under Friendſhip's Mask my Fame you'd wound.

The World, we long have known, is full of Lies,
And moſt Men wear a different Diſguiſe;
What then! ſmall Judgment needful is to find
The real Character of each one's Mind.
One Glance o'th' Eye the wanton Saint betrays,
As loud Reſponſes do the Knave that Prays.
The Coward Hero by his Boaſting's known,
The virtuous Slave by dreading *W*——'s Frown:
Thus Nature, firſt or laſt, we ever ſee't,
Of all Diſguiſes will the better get.
That all act different Parts from what they are,
To ſay, is purely puſhing Things too far.
That all have Failings, ev'n the Beſt, we own,
And none but Hypocrites will ſay they've none:

But becauſe *Indola* the Saint wou'd ſham,
Whilſt ev'ry Glance the Wanton does proclaim;
Muſt all who ſeem devout be Wantons too,
This ſure's a Doctrine broach'd now firſt by you.
In ev'ry Climate Hypocrites abound,
In ev'ry Clime the truly Good are found:
Muſt therefore theſe be cenſur'd 'cauſe of thoſe?
Such Reaſoning all Mankind will oppoſe.
Bad as the World is, 'tis not yet ſo bad,
But virtuous Men and Women may be had;
But if your Syſtem is to be believ'd,
We all deceive, and are again deceiv'd:
If this be true, as you affirm it is,
Who'd wiſh to live in ſuch a World as this?
But thanks to Heav'n all Virtue's not yet fled,
Tho' *W*——'s at the Helm, and Patriotiſm dead.

Yet the Wiſe few, who've learnt to think aright,
Set not their Thoughts on this terreſtrial Light;
Life is, they know, a tranſitory Span,
And Death approaches, fly it how we can;

Wherefore

Wherefore on Heav'n alone they meditate,
And ſet their Hearts on an eternal State;
With Scorn on ſublunary Joys look down,
In certain Hope of a cœleſtial Crown.
Try all the Joys of Life, you'll find they're vain,
Nor will the Pleaſure countervail the Pain;
Ev'n in Enjoyment Man Compunction feels,
And ſure Repentance follows at its Heels.
Let then the thoughtleſs Debauchee go on,
From Joy to Joy till his dark Courſe is run;
I'll from thoſe ſenſual Pleaſures ſtill refrain,
Nor becauſe I'm debarr'd 'em e'er complain.

By Reaſon when you wou'd th' Almighty ſca ,
You might as well attempt the Sun to ſpan:
We dread his Juſtice, and we know his Pow'r,
His Goodneſs too and Mercy, but not more.
But who e'er told you that the Deity,
Takes a Delight in Mankind's Miſery?
Reaſon ſays no, and to it I ſubſcribe,
Where then cou'd you this Falſity imbibe?

But this, perhaps, is Misery with you,
That you your Appetites are bid subdue;
And may not to your sensual Lusts give Way,
Which makes your State worse than the Beasts, you say;
If these the Ills are whereof you complain,
I won't affirm that your Complaint is vain:
But sure no reasonable Being wou'd dare,
Herself of so deprav'd a Taste declare,
At God to murmur, 'cause he does deny
Us Leave our sensual Lusts to gratify.

You say we're bound to do what can't be done,
By which you Man's free Agency disown;
And thence conclude, that Want of Pow'r will be
Punish'd by God with endless Misery;
Whilst those who're free from Sin by Heav'n's free Grace,
Will be made Heirs t'eternal Happiness.

But know, fair Atheist, Man enjoys Free-will,
And has the Pow'r of choosing Good or Ill.
Is't then unjust, if Heav'n's Sov'reign Lord,
Man, as he acts, does punish or reward?

Nor of his glorious Attributes do we,
Whilſt we hold this, diveſt the Deity.
For when his Mercy has in vain been try'd,
His Juſtice likewiſe muſt be ſatisfy'd;
And if Man falls, himſelf's alone to blame,
Nor is't unjuſt he ſuffer for the ſame.
Eternal Goodneſs, you ſay true, can ne'er
Give us our Paſſions but to prove a Snare:
Nor are our Paſſions Snares to us, unleſs,
Brute-like, we them indulge to an Exceſs.
In Reaſon we each Taſte may gratify,
But not lie plung'd in Senſuality:
To enjoy Pleaſure's not deny'd at all,
T' abuſe it only is made criminal.
Unjuſtly Man therefore of Heav'n complains,
That from the Joys of Life it him reſtrains;
When common Prudence wou'd bid him forbear
Th' Exceſs, which Heav'n does criminal declare.

Your impious Syſtem does yet farther go,
And wou'd at once both Heav'n and Hell o'erthrow;

But

But yet take Care, fair Infidel, take Care,
Recant this Doctrine whilſt Heav'n's pleas'd to ſpare;
Leſt you too late, too late, alas! ſhould find,
A dreadful Fate for Reprobates deſign'd.
With Nature ſtruggling, ſhould we be o'ercome,
Th' All-merciful, you ſay, can't ſpeak our Doom:
But don't, fair Libertine, on that depend,
Mercy abus'd, to Fury turns in th' End.

Theſe are no Dreams of a diſorder'd Mind,
Nor idle Tales for ſelfiſh Ends deſign'd;
Nor Hyp, nor Melancholy, prey on me,
Thank Heav'n what's right and wrong I plainly ſee;
I want no Phyſick's Help to purge my Brain,
Nor am I influenc'd by Fogs or Rain;
Nay, when the Eaſt Wind blows I'm as ſerene,
As if ſome Artiſt had cut out my Spleen!
Yet tho' I chearful am, and void of Fear,
I dare not make of ſacred Things a Jeer;
But, conſcious of my Failings, am reſign'd,
With Rev'rence, to the Will of the Eternal Mind.

You

You call theſe Whims, and ſay you them deſpiſe,
And think yourſelf in doing ſo moſt Wiſe;
Yet frankly own you dread the Loſs of Fame,
And curb your Paſſion, to preſerve your Name:
From ſuch falſe Prudence, Heav'n I pray keep me,
That Cenſure fears, and dares Eternity:
Paulina, who you ſay'll no Bliſs refuſe,
In this Reſpect, than you more Wiſdom ſhews;
For they who are not e'en of Hell afraid,
May truly laugh at all that's of them ſaid;
For an abandon'd luſtful Proſtitute,
Is ten Degrees below the very Brute.

Martia is lewd, you ſay, but for her Fame
More anxious, talks of Poiſon, Sword, and Flame,
Threatning th' unguarded Youth with inſtant Death,
Who dares her Honour wound with ſland'rous Breath.
Obſerve the Fruits of giving way to Sin,
How Step by Step the Devil draws us in;
Luſt's not enough, but Murder muſt be done,
To hide her ſhameful Proſtitution.

The

The quondam Spark meets an untimely Doom,
And for a freſh new Paramour makes Room;
Whilſt ſhe, impenitent, perſiſts in Vice,
And ev'ry Taſte remorſeleſs gratifies;
Till in her Sin ſhe finds her Puniſhment,
And too late grieving for her Time miſpent,
She rotting Inch by Inch, to Hell is ſent.

Ametra next is brought upon the Stage,
That Scandal ev'n of this degenerate Age;
With Groom and Coachman who in publick lies,
And the vain Cenſure of the World defies;
No willing Sportſman is by her deny'd,
Ev'n from the Stews ſhe comes unſatisfy'd,
Ten different Embraces tho' ſhe 'as try'd.

Call you a Woman this, our Sex's Shame!
Who always burning with Luſt's raging Flame,
Variety of Stallions keeps in Pay,
Yet raves for more, inſatiate, Night and Day!
Like the fam'd rampant *Meſſaline* of Yore,
Tho' jaded out by Man, unwilling to give o'er!

Infamous Wretch! abandon'd Proſtitute!
Is ſhe or *Towzer* the ignobler Brute!
Spite of her endleſs Wealth, and aukward State,
What Mortal envies lewd *Ametra*'s Fate?
Not only Women fly her like the Peſt,
But all Mankind her Company deteſt;
Deſpis'd, ſhe ſees no Soul within her Doors,
But her own Scoundrels, and Street-walking Whores.

Cou'd you but feel the ſcorn'd *Ametra*'s Pain,
The cutting Anguiſh that diſtracts her Brain,
When cool Reflection to Debauch ſucceeds,
And ev'ry Vein with inward Sorrow bleeds;
When racking Guilt no Reſpite to her Woes
Allows, but follows her where'er ſhe goes;
Till to the Bottle ſhe for Eaſe repairs,
And drowns at once her Senſes and her Cares:
Cou'd you feel this, fair Libertine, you'd own,
They're happieſt who ſuch dear-bought Pleaſures ſhun.

But you Example ſay you'll never take,
From theſe unwiſe Ones, but with Prudence Rake;

Will ev'ry Taſte enjoy, and tho' ſome Pain
It coſts, take Care your Honour not to ſtain:
Ah *Libertina!* ſince when do you find,
That Prudence was with Raking every join'd?
Still to diſſemble is no eaſy Task,
Some looſe ungarded Hour throws off the Mask;
Diſcovers what the Hypocrite conceals,
And what's at Bottom of the Heart reveals:
Take Heed, fair Libertine, this ben't your Fate,
And your loſt Reputation mourn too late.

You next proceed to tell me how your Game
You play, and which way you ſecure your Fame:
Security with Innocence alone
Conſiſts, and you one Day this Truth will own.
What tho' the Tim'rous Lover you diſcard,
If others taſte the Joys he is debarr'd
'Tis not enough that you one Sort reject,
If others equally you don't neglect.
Nor dare you lodge your Secret in their Breaſt,
You own, who of Religion make a Jeſt:

Such Men you think a Woman will betray,
Who are not mov'd at what the World can say.
The roaring Blades likewise, and Damme Boys,
Who think to carry you by Dint of Noise,
You swear shall still be Strangers to your Joys.
Nor shou'd the Fop be trusted by the Dame,
You say, who's any Value for her Fame;
Fond of himself, he will his Conquests boast,
And let her mourn her Reputation lost.
The only Man then whom you can intrust,
Who to the Favours of the Fair are just,
Are such, you say, as on the publick Spoil,
Luxurious live, exempt from Cares or Toil;
Deluded Fair One, to your Cost you'll find,
Those Wretches are the falsest of Mankind;
To neither Friendship, King, or Country true,
All they betray, and so they will thee too.

'Tis not enough that you oppose your self
If others equally you don't neglect.
Nor dare you lodge your Secret in their Breast,
You own, who of Religion make a Jest:

FINIS.